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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001155

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: DTP UPBEAT ON PROSPECTS FOR KURDISH OPENING

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary. During an August 6 dinner hosted by Democracy and Society Party (DTP) Chairman Ahmet Turk, the Ambassador stressed the importance of the DTP continuing to cooperate closely with the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) to find a solution to the Kurdish issue. Turk agreed, and insisted that a solution could not be found through violence but only through a democratic process. The DTP wanted the cultural identity of Kurds to be protected, but not necessarily through the Constitution. Turk also stated that jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan could be effective in solving the issue and bringing peace between the PKK and Turkey, and as such, his views should be taken into consideration in the peace process. Turk complained that the Ergenekon case should have been expanded beyond the alleged coup attempts on AKP power and into the crimes committed against the Kurds. He said the DTP plans to open an office in Washington to represent its interests in the United States. End Summary.

Kurdish Issue Will Not Be Resolved by Arms

12. (C) DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk, joined by two DTP MP's and Turk's chief advisor, hosted the Ambassador and three Embassy staffers to dinner on August 6. The dinner took place in the garden of a well-known restaurant in Ankara and created a palpable stir (and drew news cameras to the restaurant entrance). During dinner, the Ambassador stressed the opportunity presented in the current Kurdish initiative, and expressed hope that the DTP would cooperate closely with the ruling AKP and the opposition CHP to find a solution. Turk insisted that his party was trying to work with the CHP, but that they were using the Kurdish issue for political advantage -- opposing the government's initiatives because any success would be of great advantage for the AKP.

13. (C) Turk also emphasized that a real and lasting solution between the PKK and the GOT would not be found through violence, but only through a democratic process that protected the identity and cultural rights of the Kurds. Turk said he had told Prime Minister Erdogan that even if the GOT and U.S. eliminated all the PKK fighters, in five years something else would rise up unless a real social solution was reached. Turk stated that he was optimistic about the current initiatives, and that the "20 million" Kurds in

Turkey could serve as an example for Kurdish rights in the region as well. Sebahat Tuncel, DTP Vice-Chairperson for Foreign Relations and a Member of Parliament from Istanbul, expanded on this, stating that so long as the ethnic identity of Kurds is protected in Turkey, there would be no need to seek formal minority protections in the Constitution.

Ocalan Could Play a Productive Role

¶4. (C) Turk suggested that jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan could be effective in bringing peace between the PKK and Turkey, and that therefore Ocalan's views should be taken into consideration in finding a solution to the Kurdish issue. He recognized that the GOT would not use Ocalan as an interlocutor on the issue, and stated that DTP was ready, as the representative of the Kurdish people in Turkey, to act as interlocutor. Tuncel speculated that the August 15 roadmap that would reportedly be released by Ocalan might offer a durable solution. Tuncel said that Ocalan might use the symbolic August 15 date (the date that the PKK conducted its first attack) to put an end to the armed struggle and lay down its arms. She called it the "second August 15 initiative." Tuncel added, however, that operations by the GOT against the DTP needed to end as a show of goodwill toward solving the issues.

Ergenekon Should Be Expanded to Crimes Against the Kurds

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¶5. (C) Turk complained that the Ergenekon prosecution was being used purely as a political tool, and needed to be expanded to cover involvement in crimes against Kurds as well. He contended that the security forces have carried out nearly 16,000 extra-judicial killings against Kurds and that Ergenekon had been responsible for many of those. He stressed the need for transparency in the process. He said that the AKP was only interested in prosecuting those who had allegedly engaged in a coup attempt against the government. He argued that if the evidence regarding crimes against Kurds came to light, there would be "no doubt in the Turkish public" regarding the existence of Ergenekon.

DTP to Open an Office in Washington

¶6. (C) Turk said that the DTP plans to open a representative office in Washington, and asked for the Embassy's help in navigating the legal issues involved with such an office. This would be in addition to their international offices in Brussels and Paris. Nazmi Gur, Senior Advisor to Turk, said that he would travel to Washington next month to look into setting up the office. Gur would then staff the office in Washington. He asked for assistance in obtaining the necessary visas to do so. The Ambassador said that the Embassy would look into the legal requirements.

Comment

¶7. (C) Turk said all the right things to us about democracy, peaceful solutions, and working with the CHP. However, his public statements to the press are not as forward-thinking. While it is positive that he seems to be moving in the right direction, it is less certain that he will be able to muster the political capital within his own party to make the necessary compromises to find a lasting solution to the Kurdish issue. Since neither the AKP nor the CHP have offices in Washington, the opening of a DTP office could be viewed negatively by the other parties in Turkey, and we will provide information to them carefully on this issue. In the end, the DTP seems ready to move forward with the GOT on finding a solution to the Kurdish issue. While this will be a difficult road, we will continue to support efforts toward

a peaceful and democratic solution. The Ambassador's acceptance of a DTP dinner invitation caught much media attention but, somewhat surprisingly, little commentary. This is another symbol of how far the public opinion parameters have shifted. So far, we are being portrayed as openly supportive of -- but not intervening in -- this process, a stance we plan to maintain.

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